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ABSTRACT

A project was conducted to define positive, opportunity-focused methods to increase the percentage of high school students who are academically and personally prepared for enrollment in technical college directly after graduation. Objectives included determining how and why high school students choose to attend or not to attend vocational education, finding out how students see their preoccupational world and futures, and defining family roles in the enrollment process. Information was gathered using the Delphi method of opinion study in the Rusk County service area of Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College (WITC). Four rounds of interviews were conducted with 33 persons who were on a steering committee for the study or who were stakeholders in the college district. Some of the results of the study were the following: (1) many high school graduates are neither academically nor personally prepared for college immediately after high school; (2) youths tend to recruit themselves to WITC via word-of-mouth; (3) WITC's programs may be seen as overlapping those of its feeder schools; (4) steps may need to be taken to enhance the college's image; (5) improved off-campus housing would help attract younger students; (6) community support could be increased by bringing groups of students, parents, and teachers to visit WITC; (7) recruitment materials should be more selectively distributed; and (8) more involvement with area school guidance counselors should be fostered. (The Delphi questions and answers are included in the report.) (KC)

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WISCONSIN INDIANHEAD TECHNICAL COLLEGE

DELPHI STUDY

FINAL REPORT

JULY 20, 1990

BY

DR. ARTHUR M. HARKINS
DR. NELSON R. OTTO

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20 JULY 90

To: Director David Hildebrand and Dr. Vasant Kumar
Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

From: Visionary Management
Minneapolis, MN

Sub: Final Report
WITC Delphi Study

Purpose of the Delphi Study:

This is the Final Report of the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College Delphi Study.

The purpose of the Study was to help define a positive, opportunity-focused approach to vocational-technical education; to help Delphi participants, WITC staff, and others reflect on and develop effective awareness of planning, implementation, and support for identifying, shadowing, recruiting, counseling, coaching, mentoring, and other forms of partnering with their existing and future vocational-technical education students.

Brief Summary of Findings and Recommendations:

The direct findings of the WITC Delphi Study are as follows:

1. Many high school graduates are neither academically nor personally prepared for matriculation to WITC immediately after high school. An aggressive, "early outreach" program may be required in order to reduce the impact of this preparedness problem.

2. Young people tend to recruit themselves to WITC via word-of-mouth. WITC may wish to mount a project to learn much more about the "world views" of younger prospective students, in order to recruit them more effectively.

3. WITC's programs may be seen as overlapping with those of its feeder schools. WITC may wish to better coordinate the academic programs of feeder schools with its own programs.

4. WITC is what young prospective students perceive it to be. WITC may wish to consider steps to enhance its image to prospective students, and to better market its internal student support systems.

5. Young people may see WITC as a means to earlier income. WITC may wish to exploit this viewpoint through recruiting students who will attend four-year schools later in their careers.

6. By law, WITC and four-year Wisconsin colleges have sharply differing missions. WITC may wish to smooth out some of the student perceptions of differences between WITC and four-year colleges through a good sister campus program, and through other means.

7. WITC has no on-campus housing, and must conform to Wisconsin law prohibiting two year educational institutions from providing on-campus housing. Further development of off-campus housing programs may help to recruit younger students, particularly married ones.

8. WITC benefits from community influence on prospective students, as enacted by parents, siblings, public school teachers, and other sources. Bringing "natural" groupings of students and their parents, siblings, spouses, teachers, etc. to visit WITC may enhance the enrollment impact of such community support.

9. Pairing and "peering" are important to the social life of prospective students. WITC can work to enhance such "buddy" systems in a number of on and off-campus ways.

10. Recruitment materials must be used wisely if they are to be effective for WITC. WITC may wish to consider better distribution of recruitment materials, particularly through mechanisms which would involve the WITC faculty and the assistance of volunteers.

11. WITC has many open houses. WITC may wish to enhance the perception of "user friendliness" surrounding these events, in order to raise their recruitment impact.

12. WITC may not benefit fully from the counseling services offered by its feeder schools. WITC may wish to encourage these schools to look carefully at their counseling services, and to look at the possibility of on-line information systems with WITC.

13. WITC is already involved in distance learning, but may wish to put even more emphasis on this area of development.

Methodology of the Study:

The methodology employed in the Study was that of the Delphi method. The Delphi method has a thirty-year history of use in opinion studies.

Delphi is a "self-correcting" approach to opinion polling. This means that participants are free, for any reason, to alter their opinions about any questions put to them during the course of several Delphi "Rounds" (or question-answer sequences). Opinions are usually provided by a relatively small number of participants (20-50) compared with survey research studies, which usually employ 100 (or many more) participants.

While survey participants are usually obtained through a stratified, randomized participant selection process, Delphi participants are usually selected sociologically, for applied purposes associated with the subject matter focus of the study. Delphi participants are usually slated for further involvement in planning, including the execution of plans, after the Delphi process has been completed.

Reliability and validity measures employed in survey methods using statistical sampling processes are usually not employed in Delphi studies. Delphi studies depend for accuracy upon iterative (repetitive) question-and-response "Rounds," with participants experiencing several contacts with researchers. Delphi participants are often asked the same questions more than once, in order to measure whether their opinions have solidified or changed as a result of participation in the study.

While the reliability and validity of Delphi studies are based upon a reflective, multi-Round, iterative process, survey research studies are based upon randomized population sampling, and depend for quality upon the measuring accuracy of a one-use-only questionnaire. (A detailed background statement of the Delphi method can be found in pages 25-37 of Dr. Otto's Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesoata, 1980)

The process used in the WITC Study was Delphi (four Rounds). The majority of participants' (Steering Committee members) names were provided by WITC. The findings of the WITC Delphi Study, and its Recommendations, were therefore fundamentally the result of the characteristics and perceptions of its handpicked participants.

Who Conducted the Study:

The WITC Delphi Study was conducted by Dr. Arthur M. Harkins, an anthropologist of education in the Department of Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; and by Dr. Nelson Otto, a graduate of the same Department. Dr. Otto is President of Visionary Management and Dr. Harkins is a Senior Partner with the company.

Dr. Harkins and Dr. Otto have conducted Delphi studies for such diverse organizations as IBM, Honeywell, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the United States Air Force, and many other organizations, including numerous public school systems.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To determine how/why prospective younger students do/do not move purposively toward vocational education, and when/where/how such critical decisions are made.

2. To identify how prospective younger students see their pre-occupational world and their occupational futures.

3. To determine how prospective younger students see their own intervention points and strategies, and the costs and benefits of each.

4. To determine how the family plays a part, along with the school, the peer group, skill levels, and visions of personal futures to determine vocational choices among younger prospective students.

Background Review:

The Delphi Study was carried to a total of four Rounds, the last consisting of reviews and comments on the draft of the Final Report by four WITC staff members. This Final Report reports the major findings of the Study, and examines possible perspectives and action steps that could be taken by WITC to enhance its utility and attractiveness to prospective students of various backgrounds, but particularly younger persons.

The Study was designed to find out how high school students think about their vocational education opportunities. It was designed to learn about

potential WITC students, and how to recruit and serve these potential users in the best ways for all concerned.

The Study was based on multiple interviews conducted with 33 persons associated directly or indirectly with WITC, but it is hoped that the findings and recommendations will nevertheless be useful to others as well.

The WITC Delphi Study was designed to help get answers to these questions:

- Why don't high school students move right into vocational education and training? Where, when, and how are their decisions made?

- How do high school students see their world before they go to work in it? After they start work?

- How do high school students make decisions about vocational education and training? About work? How do they know whether these decisions will pay off for them?

- Do specific people and organizations influence the decisions high school students make about vocational education and training? About work? Who/what are these people and organizations, and how do they become important to students' decisions?

The WITC Delphi Process:

The WITC Delphi Study was conducted over a two-month period of time (late May 1990 through mid-July 1990). The Study was based on information supplied by two Steering Committees (at Rice Lake and in Ladysmith), and a list of WITC Stakeholders supplied by the members of the two Steering Committees.

The Study first obtained practical information by telephoning all members of the two Steering Committees (Round One) and asking:

- Who should participate in the Study?

- What practical questions the participants should be asked?

- How can the most practical value be obtained from participants' answers?

- When should this information be put to practical use for WITC and its Stakeholders?

The answers received to this set of questions helped us to ask a second set of very open-ended questions (Round Two). These questions were based directly on findings from the telephone interviews. These questions, asking for more detailed information about the information obtained in Round One, were put to Steering Committee members during face-to-face meetings in Rice Lake and Ladysmith, Wisconsin. The researcher allowed participant responses to lead in directions important to them, as members of the Steering Committees.

These two sets of questions acted as Delphi Round One and Two, and formed the substance of the first Interim Report.

A third set of questions was then used to interview Stakeholders and Steering Committee members by telephone. The results of these interviews helped to build the second Interim Report. This set of questions acted as Delphi Round Three.

The Delphi Round Three questions were:

1. What is the number one best thing that will attract the younger students to WITC? [Younger means very recent high school graduates.]

2. What is the number one best thing that will attract the older students to WITC? [Older means at least four years beyond high school graduation.]

3. What is the most useful thing WITC could do to improve its academic image of new students?

4. What is the most useful thing WITC could do to improve its job-related image to new students?

Potential interviewees suggested by the two Steering Committees were extremely hard to contact. Many names provided by the two Steering Committees did not have corresponding telephone listings in the towns where they were presumed to be located. Continued attempts to find telephone numbers and to call new interviewees were curtailed after two

weeks of frustrated attempts. Only five new people were interviewed. Ten people who were not interviewed were scheduled for later calls, but were not present at the time calls were placed to them. Many contacts produced information such as "gone for the summer," or "you can't phone him/her where he/she is living this summer."

However, results of the interviews which were conducted with new interviewees did not produce substantially new or different data when compared with results already in hand from earlier face-to-face and telephone interviews conducted with Steering Committee members.

The draft Final Report was delivered to five Steering Committee members for their suggested corrections and improvements at an afternoon WITC campus meeting on July 18, 1990. The time constraints of the study did not allow a meeting with Ladysmith Steering Committee members. The corrections and improvements provided by four of the WITC staff acted as Round Four of the Delphi Study.

MAJOR FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 1: Some, perhaps many, high school graduates are not "ready" for WITC matriculation immediately after they complete secondary school. It is possible that reluctance exists on the part of some faculty to see unprepared younger persons enroll at WITC, when their attitudes and behavior may limit their success in vocational education and training. Many potential students may lack contact with successful role models; or be focused on obtaining immediate wages in order to buy desired goods and services. Others may simply wish to move out of their parents' homes in order to achieve privacy. Some may be first-stage alcohol or drug abusers. Many more may not have thought through their lives a great deal, and may have received poor or little counseling, either for life or for vocation.

•**RECOMMENDATION**: WITC consider approaching younger potential students with an early outreach program that puts emphasis upon personal living and its relationship to:
vocational-technical success
attitudes and values; preparation for formal schooling; and envisioning job success. Such a personal living approach to

academic ability and accomplishment; their understanding of the changing nature of jobs and the job market; and their goals and visions for life, including hopes, aspirations, and dreams for personal, family, and longer-term job accomplishments.

The prime target audience should be grade school, middle school, and high school students. Since research indicates that a significant proportion of students begin to encounter academic difficulty during the third grade, we further recommend that a relationship be established at or before this early level. The advantage for WITC is to "plant its seeds" early with very young students and their parents.

WITC is also mandated to work closely with school counselors and social service staff to identify academically "at risk" students, and determine whether vocational education opportunities could spark their interests in education.

FINDING 2: Young people ultimately will self-recruit by word-of-mouth to WITC.
WITC therefore must be seen as a centrally attractive alternative to recent high school graduates, as compared with getting a job, going to college, becoming involved in child rearing, going on tax support, joining a military service, and so forth.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC consider interviewing k-12 students to obtain their specific, hands-on advice for making WITC attractive to the future high school graduate. WITC might wish to assemble for this purpose focus groups of young people, starting as early as kindergarten. WITC could gather information and obtain advice from such youthful focus groups; bring them to the campus along their progress from elementary school through high school; involve some of them as paid consultants in student awareness/recruitment pilot projects; and help them gain academic credit for these activities in their respective schools. Above all, such student groups could help explain WITC to their peers, and help explain their peers to WITC. In other words, WITC needs to send out its ambassadors.

FINDING 3: The working articulation between WITC courses and programs of vocational-technical curricula, and those of "feeder" schools, such as Ladysmith High, is not perfect. This can presumably affect the academic image of WITC, and even its success in recruiting and retaining younger new students.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** Curricular coordination between WITC and surrounding high schools might be reexamined, particularly in light of vocational-technical courses offered by each, and the differences, similarities, and rigor of these on both sides. Of particular importance is the "ramping" of courses of public schools, through general and specific courses and programs of study at WITC; and how efficient and productive this is from the viewpoint of new or potential students, as well as their present or former public school teachers.

WITC could consider establishing a team of faculty from Ladysmith schools and WITC to determine the content, rigor, and relationship between vocational-technical courses and programs of study offered by each. The aim of this team would be fact-finding, and would result in recommendations to curriculum committees and other bodies on both campuses. After successful completion of this work, the process could be extended to other significant WITC feeder schools and districts.

FINDING 4: Whatever the existing and future WITC outreach to prospective younger students, it will take into account perceptions held by prospective students and others.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** In addition to the approaches suggested above, WITC could build an enhanced reputation for rigor and importance that would enhance the professional partnering and curricular support of feeder schools and districts; achieve the informed support of a wide range of businesses and agencies within its sphere of recruitment; and allow a continually updated flow of video tapes, visitors, and printed materials from WITC's individual departments to many points within the surrounding communities. WITC's use of advisory committees composed of user public and private user organizations, as well as selected individuals, could provide

wares to prospective younger students. Such partners could both accompany WITC faculty on school visits and go out on their own. They could participate in departmental video and related outreach resources preparation, and they could possibly help fund some of these. Internally, WITC may need to market its student support services more vigorously.

FINDING 5: The WITC student may often see vocational-technical schooling as a way to quicker participation in the job market, and as a way to avoid "irrelevant" courses of study required by four-year colleges and universities. Some may leave college and transfer to WITC because of these factors.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC might examine the obvious and latent power of these perceptions by prospective students. There is no apparent reason why WITC cannot recruit more, and even different, kinds of younger students to its campus if they feel that they can learn marketable skills. In addition, these skills may be valued because they: do not preclude later study at a local or distant college; help students achieve the goal of earlier, better earning power; provide students with a skill which they can grow; and help students pay for later college work.

FINDING 6: By law, there is a sharp mission and status distinction made between WITC and surrounding colleges.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC may wish to consider enhancing its relationship with the Barron campus. A successful relationship can serve at least four purposes: to provide cross-campus social life; to reduce the perception of differences in the roles and statuses of the two types of campuses; to send students to, and from, both types of campuses; and to encourage the faculties and administrations of both campuses to engage in better course and program coordination, and in pilot potentially promising curriculum and recruitment developments.

FINDING 7: It appears that WITC's lack of near-campus housing encourages later matriculation by those students who prefer to live away from home immediately after completing high school.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC might wish to examine the establishment of additional near-campus housing projects. Such housing could be modular/mobile, and could be limited to younger married students, for example. The aim of this project would be to test whether the appeal of college campuses over WITC, when the appeal is based on independent living away from parents, can be mitigated, at least in the case of one or two types of younger students. Students could also live on a nearby college campus, or near it, and commute to WITC.

FINDING 8: The most important sources of influence regarding matriculation to WITC appeared to be: public school teacher inputs; parent and sibling inputs; some kinds of campus visits, including effective conversations with WITC faculty; graduating student inputs; and media inputs.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC may wish to learn more about the matriculation-related roles of parents and siblings (public school teacher suggestions have been referred to; student and media suggestions will follow). WITC may wish to establish a relationship with the parents and siblings of on-campus and graduated students, for the purpose of discovering exactly how their influence could be extended to parents whose children might become future WITC students. Such contacts might be very informal at first; these informal contacts could lead to regular contacts between families. The expectation would be that role modeling and other influences might lead younger prospective students toward WITC instead of toward, for example, delayed access to post-secondary education and training. Married students should be encouraged to bring along their spouses.

FINDING 9: Older students -and peers- are important to prospective WITC students. This is in line with Finding 2.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** Pairing and "peering" relationships can be developed between: WITC graduates or near-graduates and existing WITC students; public school graduates or near-graduates and prospective WITC students; peer-level students, both within and across public schools acting as "feeders" to WITC. These pairing and peering groups can be computerized,

and they can be put in direct contact during visits to respective campuses.

FINDING 10: Recruitment materials as a medium are not always perceived as appropriately utilized in WITC recruitment activities. Materials may be given to the wrong persons; given at the wrong times; be misleading or confusing; and even produce unintended results. It appears that there is no substitute for understandable, personalized materials, given at the right times and places, in the recruitment of younger students to WITC. The percieved quality of the person who delivers the materials seems important, as well as the setting within which this transaction takes place. It seems that the best person to deliver the materials is often the WITC instructor, in the flesh.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC instructors may need to get to know, personally, every promising prospective student in their most active feeder schools. They may need to telephone them; send personalized materials to them; invite them to WITC and even their personal labs; meet their parents; lunch with parents and the prospective student; and so forth. In short, with the aid of advisory committee members, parents, siblings, and others, the WITC instructor may need to behave like a hockey coach on permanent, part-time recruitment duty. While such an approach may not always result in obtaining the matriculation of every particular younger student, it could be a very effective tactic for obtaining the matriculation of the younger student after she or he is somewhat older. Role modeling by the WITC faculty member would be particularly important in both instances. Filled programs will not require vigorous recruitment, but constant consumer awareness will remain a necessity.

FINDING 11: WITC open houses need to occur more often, be more intimate and candid, and occur in an inviting way.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC may wish to enhance perceptions of its "user friendliness." WITC may consider how it may enhance perceptions of its open houses through: music; food; athletics; cross-visits with other schools arriving on the same dates and times; and through effective aptitude, interest,

goal, and other interviewing and assessing techniques. WITC may wish to involve working technicians in these programs, so that prospective students can meet WITC faculty, students, graduates, and professionally/technically employed people. "Stories of Success" should ring in the minds of students returning from such visits. Such visits should:

Show linkages with business; show partnerships to business; and emphasize networking between business and the college for job opportunities.

Sell WITC through profiles of students on the job, and teachers in the system. Publish job placement statistics; post-graduate followups at six months, two years and five years; publishing these could help WITC's public image.

Enhance the visibility of Career Week sat the campus, and bring people to see it. Young people man need a lot more contact with the campus. They may need the names of graduates to talk to nearby their homes.

Invite people who have made it in the work force, and have them tell how school has helped them in their careers.

Make available information about where people become employed upon completion of their programs.

Develop placement information and stories, to help prospective students move from thinking about WITC coursework through to actual employment.

Publish job placement statistics and the results of post-graduate followups at six months, two years, and at five years. Publishing these could help WITC's image.

FINDING 12: Generalization: in the American public school industry, there is perhaps no less appreciated, underfunded, and even underinformed professional service than vocational/technical and related academic counseling for students. WITC may suffer from some measure of this problem where its own recruitment of younger students is concerned. Public school counselors may be in need of better information about WITC, and even in need

of volunteer assistance in effectively getting out the word about WITC to younger prospective students.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC may wish to encourage an "in-depth" study of what is needed for feeder school counseling services, in order to determine: what students desire; whether services can or should be improved; and the resources necessary to maintain and improve quality counseling services for prospective WITC students (eg, through interactive on-line from WITC to its feeder school counselors). It is conceivable that a grant could be obtained for this purpose, and that a considerable proportion of the summer of 1991 could be devoted to such a project, with recommendations being placed before WITC by participating feeder schools in the early Fall of '91. A dial-up information service could a most beneficial outcome for students and counselors alike.

FINDING 13: Distance learning, perhaps at lower costs than other forms of learning, may be a part of WITC's future.

•**RECOMMENDATION:** WITC may wish to continue its active investigate and development of cost-attractive distance learning in the contexts of: improving curricular interfaces with feeder schools; improving counseling services; keeping prospective students up to date on changing industry, business, and associated education/training trends; and keeping in better contact with graduates. Distance learning technologies can also be associated with "just-in-time" education and training in off-campus business and other locations as needs for such services continue to change faster.

Major Conclusions of the WITC Delphi Study:

The questionable image or status of vocational/technical education is noted in the participants' comments. It is possible that the single most important opportunity facing WITC and similar colleges is to enhance their low status as perceived from the viewpoints of some prospective younger students.

While not noted in the Delphi data, world-class quality, by department of preparation, is one part of the technical college image that would receive a highly favorable response by other kinds of observers and stakeholders than younger prospective students.

Perhaps involvement of faculty in somewhat more visible research and development activities would add value to the perceived importance and standing of technical colleges.

The second most important piece of the Study, from a more detached viewpoint, is the implied lower quality of students choosing vocational/technical education. Recruitment for the most qualified and motivated students is one future which colleges such as WITC might wish to ponder, then carefully develop, with high energy.

Afterword: Is The Prospective Younger Student A Free Consumer or a Community Product?

An interesting and potentially very important part of the Delphi results appears to have concerned "campus climate," or WITC culture. WITC culture is the whole ball game -- the symbolic/physical arena in which recruitment visions/strategics/tactics either flop or fly, and toward which the younger potential student directs interest or indifference.

Perhaps the underlying basic issue of WITC campus climate is "What is the campus perception of each potential younger student?" Is the student is seen primarily as a free-choice consumer? Is the student is seen primarily as a "ward" of parents, public school experience and the community?

Many of the tactical and strategic ideas of the Delphi point toward the younger prospective student as a free consumer, but there is an undertone of important family/public school/community influence. WITC students we talked with appeared to be pushing for both the consumer and ward models.

The consumer/community "ward" approach to the prospective younger student poses both problems and opportunities for the recruitment process. How should WITC relate to the individual younger prospective student? How much "power" in recruitment should the public schools have?

Is WITC a service primarily for the individual student consumer, or for the student as a product of the family/public school/community? How can the free consumer/"ward" dichotomy be treated practically in the recruitment of prospective younger students?

It is our impression that the consumer-ward dichotomy must be addressed in the context of different interpretations of WITC's recruitment practices -- and its mission. This is especially true where the recruitment of high-calibre students is concerned.

Approaches to basic definitions of the prospective younger student are best made by the persons directly involved in the present and future of WITC's recruitment process, along with prospective younger students and their parents, public school staff, and community people.

Additional Suggested Approaches to Recruitment:

Visionary Management respectfully offers concluding suggestions based less on Delphi information than on its own experience. The first suggestion is perhaps the most important, because it is directly tied to the issues raised in the preceding section.

•By all concerned: a strong, empathic focus on prospective younger students' needs, wants, personalities, experiences, etc.;

•Staff development in contacting, interesting, getting to know and serve, and ultimately recruiting the younger prospective student;

•Forging Personal Development Contracts between WITC departments and prospective younger students--get them thinking about skills needed through the 90's;

•Developing futuring and visioning skills for prospective younger students, parents, high school staff, and WITC faculty;

•Parental development in assisting the staff in these services;

•Developing up-to-date, integrated curricula for both WITC and its feeder schools;

•Developing integrative or "systems" curricula to tie together WITC and college curricula;

•"Immediate application" curricula at both levels: prospective younger students should perceive that vocational-technical

curricula can practically help them in high school, and that this benefit will surely pay off even more during and after WITC matriculation and graduation;

•Putting selected distance curricula into attractive, lively, and practical software/hardware combinations for use by the prospective younger student;

•Developing routine off-campus local, regional, national, and international trips associated with WITC curricula (for example, to Japan, Germany, excellent American vocational schools, 3M, Sony America, and so forth.

DELPHI APPENDIX: COMPILATIONS OF RESULTS FROM ROUNDS I-III

Results from the first three Rounds of questions were very impressive, and give evidence of great faith in technical education if it is properly advertised and conducted. The categorized results of this association follow.

There were four prime questions that the Delphi Study was designed to answer, with help from the Steering Committees. These four questions were associated with data gathered from the first two Rounds of the Delphi process.

The four questions follow, together with interview data that is logically associated with each.

- **Why don't high school students move right into vocational education and training? Where, when, and how are their decisions made?**

  there is often a ten-year gap in matriculation to tech school; maturation, economics, and the effects of entry-level jobs bring people back; tech school looks better after some real-life experiences

  the high school diploma is looking more attractive as the value of the GED is lessened, and as it becomes tougher to get the GED

  people get tired of factory work

  WITC doesn't hit the schools enough; needs to publicize much more; need more handouts; need more financial aid packages and information; students feel unable to go because of money and knowledge problems

  students need to self-recruit to tech school

  little involvement exists between high schools and WITC

no late night classes are offered

hassles getting credit at WITC by high school students

have no knowledge of cross-listed credit courses between WITC and high schools

kids want out; don't want to live at home and commute

curriculum at WITC is too basic; many kids have already had much of it

need coordination of WITC curriculum with the high schools

need much more effort at distance learning

there is NO special student focus at WITC

WITC has an average reputation at Ladysmith HS

some students think WITC is not high enough caliber

Why did you choose school, and area, that you did?

Do they know what WITC is? Majority may have preconceived ideas that may not be accurate. Ask them what we do; differences between us and a four-year college, for example.

What their curriculum includes while they're in high school; business skills, etc; what is being offered there? Kids need prep in shop, business skills, etc.

How they decide where they want to go; what influences their decisions toward that.

What parents are saying, asking, and developing with their own kids vis-a-vis career plans; responsibility is with parents more than with schools. What do they expect of their children?

Questions: academic skills of kids; what are they? Should kids go to college or to vocational? Can skills be upgraded? How about role of apprenticeships?

Maybe apprenticeships should substitute for both college and vocational.

How do the students decide what they want to be? Why do they change their minds? Eyewitness experiences: might help them?

Why would you choose that college over a state college?

If you aren't going to attend WITC, why? What got in your way? If there were more on-campus activities for the students, would that make the campus more attractive?

Why aren't you going to WITC?

Ask them about their career objectives and goals; what they have heard about WITC; financial aid and costs of going there--what do they know about these; what type of degree they are interested in.

What do they want to do? School? Their whole lives? Most of them don't know. Tell them what the tech schools have to offer.

- **How do high school students see their world <u>before</u> they go to work in it? <u>After</u> they start work?**

How can we help them?

have people come to the high schools

students can't always adjust schedules to make these meetings

high school students are very busy

need bright posters with day of visit

put all kids in an auditorium for orientation to WITC

good for kids to hear other kids' questions

kids need to know when reps are coming to school

the armed services are the best recruiters; let you know they are there

poor communication between WITC and the high schools

home room instructors must read aloud notices about visits

direct mailing to HS students need to be personalized

surveys do not help students make up their minds

WITC is seen as the easy way out; most people don't understand the benefits of tech school vs. college

WITC is not big enough; too small town; too close to parents; students need a bigger change

many try college and then the tech schools

vo-techs are seen as places to fix engines; learn typing; get a low-level job

public's image of tech schools is not good

advantages: two-year is shorter, personalized; quicker job; pay off debts

academic reputation is not very important for techs; more important for colleges

older students are more interested in academic reputations

fifteen credits of general ed transfer to college; specific credits may or may not transfer

need to get info and inquiries to students much earlier--perhaps in grade school

- **How do high school students make decisions about vocational education and training? About work? How do they know whether these decisions will pay off for them?**

How did they get to technical college?

my instructor in high school; wasn't decided at first; didn't want four year degree

college wasn't for me; my parents were important in this decision

telecom interested me; I transferred from college; it was important to talk to friends and instructors

I didn't have enough proper information to make the decision;

my brother influenced me

not enough information about myself; didn't know much until I actually started doing it

no real information about student interests was gathered at Ladysmith; they just gave us a "stupid test"

visits to campus were helpful, because we could see computers and machinery

visits weren't helpful because we couldn't see the software

visits were good because we could talk to instructors

saw/heard radio/tv ads, and read flyers from WITC

How can we help them?

Connect them with the upcoming graduates so that they know what to choose and how to go about that. Wait until school year to give out information; kids not willing to think about these things during the summer.

If things tell us we're not performing, may need to change policy, public relations, and community communications. Should take action

immediately when we get the information from these people; should not let it sit on the shelf.

Not sure about application of results. Not sure about application times.

Distribute answers to high schools; give students the benefit of the information.

Distribute information right away, because next year it may affect decisions about tech school.

Have a symposium to deliver results; assess and evaluate the answers so as to get back to people with better choices for their decisioning. Answers must go back to principal players; must impress people with results and get changes into practice no later than next fall, 1990.

Younger students (very recent high school graduates):

Quality education. A future with a job. Social relations

Most are 28-29. Location, lakes, river, sports and recreation should attract students. Located right next to a UW campus, so students can go to both and engage in co-activities, such as dances. Programs are shorter than college and specific to the careers they're training in.

Availability of jobs--they make a direct connection between WITC and jobs.

Technology--how equipped is the school to provide for that training? Calibre of instructors, and be able to meet with them, to know them.

Need to be aware of offerings; any way that can get to students will attract them.

Nothing. They like it, and never had any difficulty there; they do complain about the teachers sometimes.

Older students (four years or much more beyond high school):

Opportunity for retraining. Career development.

That's the group we draw from. Close to home, don't have to travel a great deal. Most students are retraining after dead end earlier jobs.

Jobs!!

Curriculum: more than the basic skills; in-depth, extensive courses. Get right to the core of the matter. But general ed is still useful and required. Maybe older students need exemptions from some of the general courses.

Need to be aware of offerings; any way that can get to students will attract them.

Do they offer GED classes there? That would help.

Improving WITC's academic image to new students:

Better orientation, or improved orientation. More of an overview of what training is going to unfold for them, and a chance for them to talk about their expectations.

Media, marketing success stories of graduates and their careers; we still suffer from tech college image, but this is based on error. Good careers come from our programs--these are a matter of choice, not worse than something else.

Get into the schools; bring the campus to the kids. Not enough visits at all! Must get at kids at much earlier grade levels.

More open house things; go into shops, labs; see what is being offered and how; more direct contacts. Annual or semi-annual basis.

Making available information about where people become employed upon completion of their programs

Quite hard for my niece at Barron; a lot easier at WITC. Took same type of classes at both. Of course, Barron is a college. Won't have to take English, psychology, and social studies at WITC.

Improving WITC's job-related image to new students:

Show linkages with business; show partnerships to business; and emphasize networking between business and the college for job opportunities.

Trying to sell our school through profiles of students on the job, and teachers in the system. Publishing job placement statistics; post-graduate followups at six months, two years and five years; publishing these might help our public image.

Brochures not good enough...need a career week at the campus, and bring people over there to see it. Need a lot more contact with the campus. Kids need names of graduates to talk to!

Invite people who have made it in the work force, and how school has helped them in their careers.

Making available information about where people become employed upon completion of their programs.

More placement, to help them move from coursework to actual working.

- **Do specific people and organizations influence the decisions high school students make about vocational education and training? About work? Who/what are these people and**

organizations, and how do they become important to students' decisions?

Students and parents and guidance counselors.

People who have gone to the college; parents of these people.

Teachers; students; parents; guidance counselors.

High school counselors; vocational teachers in the public schools; principals of appropriate schools; students, especially seniors.

Just people in general.

Students; parents; vocational teachers; community members in general.

Students.

High school teachers.

High school counselors, instructors, and students. Need to involve both big and small schools, not just one school. WITC staff and administration also.

High school instructors; high school counselors; high school kids.

High school students; some high school graduates; some older ones who have come back to tech school.

Students; counselors; instructors; and parents.

How can we help them?

If your kid is not going to college, what other alternatives do you have for your child? If none, what help do you need? (Many parents don't know costs are low for vocational education.) Often, parents aren't too sharp; must get to these people through WITC, counselors, etc. This is a big, underdeveloped area: parental competence.

Go to students with the answers; then to parents; they might see what needs to be changed to implement the ideas coming from the Delphi.

Guidance counselors at the high schools should get that information; print it in the local newspapers and newsletters; make people aware that technical colleges are out there. Sometimes, they don't give these colleges a chance over the state colleges. Make sure credits transferrable to a state college.

Get information to 18-19 year-olds in the community; use different forms of communication; go into classes; take people onto the WITC campus. **Scholarships** might attract people as well.

Kids: start sophomore-junior years; work with parents before that. Make real decisions in the senior year. Should know about each kid's strengths and weakness at the sophomore and junior years, so that they can be

helped to find right decisions. Many kids have hands-on skills but not knowledge skills.

Sooner you get the ideas, sooner you can help students with decisions; better not top wait with the ideas.

Put information to use immediately; guidance counselors and community people need this information at all times.

Distance learning; school district support through community education; distance is a big factor for some of the kids; better housing in the larger towns; need to deal with these distance factors. Just a few miles can make all the extra difference in difficulty.

Information should be given in winter months when kids are choosing their campuses; get information to them their junior and senior years during the winter months.

Programs; variable tuition needs to be looked at; need to look at these; more technical kinds of classes instead of woodwork; Wausau has laser program; costs are becoming a problem--need to look at that; business curricula; satellites for distance learning. Faster information to stakeholders would result in better competitive recruitment.

I'm not sure.

Should put information to use as soon as we have it.

Two tiers: write up something for WITC; have WITC or VM have a public forum with the juniors at the high school; tell them what we found, so that communications gaps can be bridged; should also let teachers know what we've found; also about financial aids, etc; need real expertise in getting information to the kids at the right places and times, especially face-to-face.

Information should be ready for this September; should be used for enrollment by Christmastime. Should be ready for career days; WITC should actually tour WITC for a full day.

Not sure.

Should put it to work right away.

APPENDIX: DATA SETS

FIRST SET OF QUESTIONS: FINDINGS FROM THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH THE LADYSMITH HIGH SCHOOL STEERING COMMITTEE

WHO SHOULD BE IN THE STUDY?

Superintendent, Dr. William Bobee.
Principal, Don Rubow should be in study.

Counselor, Kolski should be in study.
Some members of schoolboard.
Parents: Leave that to Superintendent and those above.

Students and parents should be in the study; Mr. Kolski should be in it; Linbeloff, the guidance counselor.

People who have gone to the college; parents of these people.

Teachers; students; parents; guidance counselors; Dr. John Runstrom.

High school counselor; vocational teachers in the public schools; principals of appropriate schools; students, especially seniors.

Just people in general.

Students; parents; vocational teachers; community members in general; Bill Sterns Motors; Rod Marinucci, a teacher at the high school; Kelly Golat, a student at the high school going to WITC; Shelly Canfield at the high school also;
Dan Schwaab, another junior; Brad Rogers, another student.

Students.

WHAT PRACTICAL QUESTIONS SHOULD THE STAKEHOLDERS BE ASKED?

Questions: academic skills of kids; what are they? Should kids go to college or to vocational? Can skills be upgraded? How about role of apprenticeships?
Maybe apprenticeships should substitute for both college and vocational.

How do the students decide what they want to be? Why do they change their minds? Eyewitness experiences: might help them?

Why did you choose that college over a state college?

If you aren't going to attend WITC, why? What got in your way? If there were more on-campus activities for the students, would that make the campus more attractive?

Why aren't you going to WITC?

Ask them about their career objectives and goals; what they have heard about WITC; financial aid and costs of going there--what do they know about these; what type of degree they are interested in.

What do they want to do? School? Their whole lives? Most of them don't know. Tell them what the tech schools have to offer.

HOW SHOULD WE GET THE MOST VALUE FROM THESE STAKEHOLDERS' ANSWERS, AND WHEN SHOULD THIS INFORMATION BE PUT TO WORK?

If your kid is not going to college, what other alternatives do you have for your child? If none, what help do you need? (Many parents don't know costs are low for vocational education.)
Often, parents aren't too sharp; must get to these people through WITC, counselors, etc. This is a big, underdeveloped area: parental competence.

Go to students with the answers; then to parents; they might see what needs to be changed to implement the ideas coming from the Delphi.

Guidance counselors at the high schools should get that information; print it in the local newspapers and newsletters; make people aware that technical colleges are out there. Sometimes, they don't give these colleges a chance over the state colleges. Make sure credits transferrable to a state college.

Get information to 18-19 year-olds in the community; use different forms of communication; go into classes; take people onto the WITC campus.
Scholarships might attract people as well.

Kids: start sophomore-junior years; work with parents before that. Make real decisions in the senior year. Should know about each kid's strengths and weakness at the sophomore and junior years, so that they can be helped to find right decisions. Many kids have hands-on skills but not knowledge skills.

Sooner you get the ideas, sooner you can help students with decisions; better not top wait with the ideas.

Put information to use immediately; guidance counselors and community people need this information at all times.

Distance learning; school district support through community education; distance is a big factor for some of the kids; better housing in the larger towns; need to deal with these distance factors. Just a few miles can make all the extra difference in difficulty.

Information should be given in winter months when kids are choosing their campuses; get information to them their junior and senior years during the winter months.

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Information should be ready for this September; should be used for enrollment by Christmastime. Should be ready for career days; WITC should actually tour WITC for a full day.

Not sure.

Should put it to work right away.

SECOND SET OF QUESTIONS (ROUND 2):

FINDINGS FROM THE TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS WITH THE RICE LAKE STEERING COMMITTEE

WHO SHOULD BE IN THE STUDY?

High school teachers; Linda Jantzen, one of the teachers.

High school counselors, instructors, and students. Need to involve both big and small schools, not just one school. WITC staff and administration also.

High school instructors; high school counselors; high school kids.

High school students; some high school graduates; some older ones who have come back to tech school.

Students; counselors, instructors; and parents.

WHAT PRACTICAL QUESTIONS SHOULD THE STAKEHOLDERS BE ASKED?

Why did you choose school, and area, that you did?

Do they know what WITC is? Majority may have preconceived ideas that may not be accurate. Ask them what we do; differences between us and a four-year college, for example.

What their curriculum includes while they're in high school; business skills, etc; what is being offered there? Kids need prep in shop, business skills, etc.

How they decide where they want to go; what influences their decisions toward that.

What parents are saying, asking, and developing with their own kids vis-a-vis career plans; responsibility is with parents more than with schools. What do they expect of their children?

HOW SHOULD WE GET THE MOST VALUE FROM THESE STAKEHOLDERS' ANSWERS, AND WHEN SHOULD THIS INFORMATION BE PUT TO WORK?

Connect them with the upcoming graduates so that they know what to choose and how to go about that. Wait until school year to give out information; kids not willing to think about these things during the summer.

If things tell us we're not performing, may need to change policy, public relations, and community communications. Should take action immediately when we get the information from these people; should not let it sit on the shelf.

Not sure about application of results. Not sure about application times.

Distribute answers to high schools; give students the benefit of the information. Distribute information right away, because next year it may affect decisions about tech school.

Have a symposium to deliver results; assess and evaluate the answers so as to get back to people with better choices for their decisioning. Answers must go back to principal players; must impress people with results and get changes into practice no later than next fall, 1990.

NOTES FROM MEETINGS WITH TWO STEERING COMMITTEES ON 18 MAY 90

RICE LAKE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:

How did you get to technical college?

- •my instructor in high school; wasn't decided at first; didn't want four year degree
- •college wasn't for me; my parents were important in this decision
- •telecom interested me; I transferred from college; it was important to talk to friends and instructors
- •I didn't have enough proper information to make the decision;
- •my brother influenced me
- •not enough information about myself; didn't know much until I actually started doing it
- •no real information about student interests was gathered at Ladysmith; they just gave us a "stupid test"
- •visits to campus were helpful, because we could see computers and machinery
- •visits weren't helpful because we couldn't see the software
- •visits were good because we could talk to instructors
- •saw/heard radio/tv ads, and read flyers from WITC

Suggestions:

- •have people come to the high schools
- •students can't always adjust schedules to make these meetings
- •high school students are very busy
- •need bright posters with day of visit
- •put all kids in an auditorium for orientation to WITC
- •good for kids to hear other kids' questions
- •kids need to know when reps are coming to school
- •the armed services are the best recruiters; let you know they are there
- •poor communication between WITC and the high schools
- •home room instructors must read aloud notices about visits
- •direct mailing to HS students need to be personalized

- surveys do not help students make up their minds
- WITC is seen as the easy way out; most people don't understand the benefits of tech school vs. college
- WITC is not big enough; too small town; too close to parents; students need a bigger change
- many try college and then the tech schools
- vo-techs are seen as places to fix engines; learn typing; get a low-level job
- public's image of tech schools is not good
- advantages: two-year is shorter, personalized; quicker job; pay off debts
- academic reputation is not very important for techs; more important for colleges
- older students are more interested in academic reputations
- fifteen credits of general ed transfer to college; specific credits may or may not transfer
- need to get info and inquiries to students much earlier--perhaps in grade school

LADYSMITH HIGH SCHOOL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING:

How do people get to tech school?

- there is often a ten-year gap in matriculation to tech school; maturation, economics, and the effects of entry-level jobs bring people back; tech school looks better after some real-life experiences
- the high school diploma is looking more attractive as the value of the GED is lessened, and as it becomes tougher to get the GED
- people get tired of factory work
- WITC doesn't hit the schools enough; needs to publicize much more; need more handouts; need more financial aid packages and information; students feel unable to go because of money and knowledge problems
- students need to self-recruit to tech school
- little involvement exists between high schools and WITC
- no late night classes are offered
- hassles getting credit at WITC by high school students

•have no knowledge of cross-listed credit courses between WITC and high schools

•kids want out; don't want to live at home and commute

•curriculum at WITC is too basic; many kids have already had much of it

•need coordination of WITC curriculum with the high schools

•need much more effort at distance learning

•there is NO special student focus at WITC

•WITC has an average reputation at Ladysmith HS

•some students think WITC is not high enough caliber

DELPHI ROUND ROUND THREE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the number one best thing that will attract the younger students to WITC? [Younger means very recent high school graduates.]

•Quality education. A future with a job. Social relations

•Most are 28-29. Location, lakes, river, sports and recreation should attract students. Located right next to a UW campus, so students can go to both and engage in co-activities, such as dances. Programs are shorter than college and specific to the careers they're training in.

•Availability of jobs--they make a direct connection between WITC and jobs.

•Technology--how equipped is the school to provide for that training? Calibre of instructors, and be able to meet with them, to know them.

•Need to be aware of offerings; any way that can get to students will attract them.

•Nothing. They like it, and never had any difficulty there; they do complain about the teachers sometimes.

2. What is the number one best thing that will attract the older students to WITC? [Older means at least four years beyond high school graduation.]

•Opportunity for retraining. Career development.

•That's the group we draw from. Close to home, don't have to travel a great deal. Most students are retraining after dead end earlier jobs.

•Jobs!!

•Curriculum: more than the basic skills; in-depth, extensive courses. Get right to the core of the matter. But general ed is still useful and

required. Maybe older students need exemptions from some of the general courses.

•Need to be aware of offerings; any way that can get to students will attract them.

•Do they offer GED classes there? That would help.

3. What is the most useful thing WITC could do to improve its academic image of new students?

•Better orientation, or improved orientation. More of an overview of what training is going to unfold for them, and a chance for them to talk about their expectations.

•Media, marketing success stories of graduates and their careers; we still suffer from tech college image, but this is based on error. Good careers come from our programs--these are a matter of choice, not worse than something else.

•Get into the schools; bring the campus to the kids. Not enough visits at all! Must get at kids at much earlier grade levels.

•More openhouse things; go into shops, labs; see what is being offered and how; more direct contacts. Annual or semi-annual basis.

•Making available information about where people become employed upon completion of their programs
Bishop: Quite hard for my niece at Barron; a lot easier at WITC. Took same type of classes at both. Of course, Barron is a college. Won't have to take English, psychology, and social studies at WITC.

4. What is the most useful thing WITC could do to improve its job-related image to new students?

•Show linkages with business; show partnerships to business; and emphasize networking between business and the college for job opportunities.

•Trying to sell our school through profiles of students on the job, and teachers in the system. Publishing job placement statistics; post-graduate followups at six months, two years and five years; publishing these might help our public image.

•Brochures not good enough...need a career week at the campus, and bring people over there to see it. Need a lot more contact with the campus. Kids need names of graduates to talk to!

•Invite people who have made it in the work force, and how school has helped them in their careers.

•Making available information about where people become employed upon completion of their programs.